

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 DODE-00 MCT-01 ACDA-12 /061 W
-----113191 211345Z /50
R 201125Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6191

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0868

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SO
SUBJ: SIAD'S VERSION OF THE APRIL 9 COUP ATTEMPT

1. DURING A MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 19, SOMALI PRESIDENT SIAD PRESENTED HIS ACCOUNT OF THE APRIL 9 COUP D'ETAT ATTEMPT. THE SOMALI LEADER SAID IT WAS A MINOR AFFAIR, BUT HAD ROOTS WHICH WENT BACK TO THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN 1969. HE SAID THE PLOTTERS CONVINCED TROOPS TO MOVE ON MOGADISCIO BY CONTENDING THERE WAS A SPLIT IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THAT THE PRESIDENT NEEDED THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMY. THE TANK CREWS WHO, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE LEADING THE COUP FORCES IMMEDIATELY RALLIED TO THE LOYALISTS WHEN THE TRUE SITUATION WAS EXPLAINED TO THEM. SIAD SAID IT WAS REGRETTABLE THAT THERE WERE CASUALTIES IN THE COUP. "THAT IS MY FAULT", HE CONTINUED. HE SAID HE KNEW ABOUT COUP PREPARATIONS IN ADVANCE, BUT HAD NOT TAKEN THE REPORTS SERIOUSLY. HE ADMITTED THE COUP WAS TRACEABLE IN PART TO CLAN FEELINGS, BUT THOSE WHO LAUNCHED IT, HE SAID, WERE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO TRIED TO ESTABLISH A CLAN DOMINATED RATHER THAN PATRIOTIC GOVERNMENT IN 1969.

2. SIAD SAID THAT FOUR OF THE PLOTTERS ESCAPED TO KENYA. OTHERS HE SAID HAD BEEN ARRESTED. THE INVESTIGATION IS CONTINUING, HE SAID, AND IT IS BECOMING CLEAR JUST HOW THE PLOT WAS PUT TOGETHER. HE EXPLAINED THAT THERE WAS NO HASTE TO BRING THE SUSPECTS TO TRIAL, BUT THAT SUCH A TRIAL WOULD TAKE PLACE IN
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GOOD TIME. HE ADDED THAT SOME OF THE CONSPIRATORS HAD FOREIGN CONNECTIONS, BUT HE DID NOT STRESS THOSE TIES. HE SAID THE PLOTTERS MADE A GREAT MISTAKE IN DECIDING THAT HE, SAID, AND HIS FAMILY WOULD NOT FIGHT IF THREATENED. THAT IS NOT MY STYLE, HE COMMENTED, "I NEVER RUN FROM A FIGHT".

3. COMMENT: UNFORTUNATELY WITH THE PRESS OF OTHER MATTERS THERE WAS

NOT TIME TO DELVE FURTHER INTO SIAD'S ACCOUNT OF THE COUP. HE
PROFESSED NEVER TO HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY WORRIED OR FELT THREATENED
IN THE BRIEF PERIOD BETWEEN IDENTIFYING THE ATTEMPT AND ITS SUPPRESSION.

THAT MAY BE TRUE, BUT SECURITY PRECAUTIONS IN THE PRESIDENTIAL COM-
POUND EXCEED THOSE IN FORCE IN THE PRE-ATTEMPT TIME FRAME.
EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL GUARDS HAVE BEEN TREBLED, AND MUCH MORE MILITARY

HARDWARE IS IN EVIDENCE ABOUT THE COMPOUND THAN WAS EARLIER THE
CASE. THE TANKS ARE GONE, BUT THE CAMOUFLAGED UNIFORMED
INFANTRY BACKING UP THE REGULAR PRESIDENTIAL GUARDS STAND AS
VISUAL REMINDERS OF THE APRIL 9 ATTEMPT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, SECURITY, PLOTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOGADI00868
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780171-0158
Format: TEL
From: MOGADISCIO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780435/aaaabdmg.tel
Line Count: 75
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0f6479aa-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2903841
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SIADY'S VERSION OF THE APRIL 9 COUP ATTEMPT
TAGS: PINS, MARR, SO, (MOHAMED SIAD BARRE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0f6479aa-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014